



Child Protection Policy



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Child Protection Policy

For _____

(From now on called "the centre.")

Our child protection policy is all about keeping children safe and protected at our centre. If there are any concerns or allegations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour involving our staff or volunteers, we will take them seriously. Our policy makes sure that these concerns are thoroughly investigated and managed while keeping our promise to protect children. It also makes sure that a fair process is followed for managing staff and volunteers. The safety and well-being of every child in our care is very important to us.

Note: where the word "staff" is used, this includes those who are hired to perform a service by the centre and includes governing body members and centre volunteers.

Awareness of the policy

All staff and volunteers must read and sign our Child Protection policy on their first day. We want to make sure that everyone understands and commits to keeping children safe. We also display a notice that shows our Child Protection policy on our centre walls. This notice encourages children and adults who use our services to offer feedback if they feel that a child's right to protection is being compromised within our centre. The notice is placed in a visible space where everyone can see it.

Policy

Even if staff, volunteers, and those who work for the centre do not sign the Child Protection policy, they will still be subject to the **South African Child Protection Policy** code and the commitments of the centre. The commitment to this code of conduct will be



renewed every year to remind all staff of their duty to protect children and of the need to make sure that their behaviour and attitudes towards children and their families show this commitment.

The centre will take action to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse. The centre will also do investigations while maintaining the rights of the children and staff, and others who may be under investigation.

The centre will:

- Always follow the child protection process and the best interests of the child.
- Take all concerns raised relating to the safety and well-being of children very seriously.
- Take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the topic of any concerns.
- Support children, staff, and other adults who raise concerns or who are the topic of concern.
- Expect all parties to act appropriately and effectively when it comes to managing child abuse. This includes following the existing laws and policies related to child abuse. If there is an investigation or any follow-up process, we also encourage cooperation in order to address the situation properly.
- Listen to the views and wishes of children seriously.
- Work in partnership with parents/guardians and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

Child protection within the centre environment

It is important for all staff and volunteers in contact with children to:

- Be aware of and manage situations that may present/courage risks.
- Plan and organise the layout and functioning of the centre to lower risks.
- Make sure that management is always available and willing to listen to any concerns of abuse or misconduct.
- Make sure that staff and parents/guardians are ready to be accountable for their actions so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.
- Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to talk about any worries they might have.
- Empower children by talking about their rights with them, including acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and what they can do if there is a problem.
- Make sure that a child is always with two or more adults (not just one).

All centre staff have a responsibility to:

- Treat every child with dignity and respect regardless of differences in ethnicity, religion, age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, and financial circumstances.



- Behave in a way that sets a positive example for children and represents the centre well. You are all important role models for the children we serve!
- Immediately raise any concerns for the safety or well-being of a child following the reporting process found below.
- Listen to children, take their concerns seriously, and allow them to have a say in the decisions that affect them.
- Take all reasonable steps to make sure that children are not placed at risk of abuse.

Centre staff and volunteers must not:

- Behave in a way that will shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade children or reflects any form of emotional abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions, or offer help that is inappropriate, offensive, or abusive.
- Do things that a child can do for him/herself, such as help with going to the toilet or changing clothes.
- Smack, hit, or physically assault children.
- Develop sexual relationships with children or relationships with children that in any way be found exploitative or abusive.
- Place a child at risk of abuse by not taking all reasonable steps to protect children who are at risk of abuse.
- Behave physically in a way that is wrong or sexually provocative towards a child.
- Accept or participate in behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe, or abusive.
- Act in a way that shows unfair treatment or favour toward some children while excluding others.
- Take photos or videos of a child without the permission of the child and his/her parents/guardians.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle, or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary, or culturally frowned-on way.

Touching should:

- o Only be in response to the need of the child.
 - o Happen with the child's permission (except in an emergency).
 - o Avoid the breasts, buttocks, and groin; and always be open and non-secretive.
- Have a child/children stay with them overnight at their home unsupervised.
 - Sleep in the same bed as a child they are employed to look after (unless in the event of specific situations such as camps, in which case another adult must also be present).



Awareness and Information

The centre will make sure that all staff and individuals covered by this policy are aware of the issue of child abuse, the potential risks to children, and their responsibility to protect them. We prioritise educating everyone on this important matter.

The following steps will be followed:

- Employment agreements and other all other agreements with the centre will refer to the child protection policy.
- All staff and volunteers will receive training on children's rights and the child protection policy.
- All children, parents/guardians, staff, and other relevant adults that come into contact with the centre will be given information on:
 - How centre staff members and others should interact with them,
 - How to make complaints relating to the behaviour of centre staff members and other centre members.

Prevention

The centre will make sure, through awareness, good practice, and human resource management, that staff work to lower the risks to children.

This will be done through:

- Employment and selection processes that look to employ staff who are good at working with children.
- Making sure that children and families who are associated with the centre are aware of their rights within the centre's policy and constitution.
- Creating Performance Management and Project Evaluation systems that help staff to raise, discuss and fix areas of their work that may result in stress or other personal responses that may place children at risk.

Reporting

The centre will make sure that staff and members, including children, parents/guardians, and other adults, know and understand what steps to take when there are incidents to report or concerns to raise regarding the safety of children.

This will be done by creating steps and processes to make sure that everyone reports all incidents of abuse that come to their attention.

Please initial here: _____



Responding

The centre will take action to investigate complaints relating to the safety of children within the context of the centre and will support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

This will be done by:

- Creating steps and processes to investigate complaints and quickly act against staff and members found guilty of abusive behaviour toward children. This will operate within the framework provided by South African legislation.
- Taking action to protect and support the children, parents/guardians, and other adults who make complaints.
- Providing feedback to those who made the complaints on the outcomes of the complaints.

Protective Systems relating to the centre services

This section gives more detail on the protective systems that will be created relating to the direct services.

Direct services to children at an individual level and group level:

- Information must be provided to children in the presence of their parents/guardians, both in words and in written form, in the language of the child. Information must include their rights not to be harmed or abused by the people/person providing services.
- Information must be provided to children in the presence of their parents/guardians, both in words and in written form, in the language of the child as to how they may complain should they believe that they have been harmed or abused by the people/person providing services.
- In relation to both of the above, both children and their parents/guardians must be told that it is their right to complain and that they will be supported and protected by the centre if they wish to make a complaint.
- Complaints can be made in words, in writing, or over the phone to the centre manager and/or
- Governing body or any other centre staff.

Staff who become aware of the abuse of children at the centre must:

- Report the abuse of children that comes to their attention as soon as possible to the Centre manager/or governing body, either in words, over the phone, or in writing, and not later than 24 hours after the event where the situation is not regarded as life-threatening.
- Centre staff must act to secure the safety of children who they may observe in the process of being harmed and are required to provide full details of the event in writing as soon as possible, and not later than 48 hours after the event.



Investigating and responding to complaints

- All complaints and reports of abuse must be given to the centre manager/or the governing body immediately.
- Centre staff who receive reports or complaints have a duty to act immediately if the life or safety of a child is at risk.
- The governing body must assess the complaints received as soon as they are received and must start procedures for investigating and responding to these complaints.
- All complaints must be reviewed by the centre manager/or governing body.
- Complaints and reports received must be assessed in terms of the South African Child Protection policy, the centre's protection policy, and the centre's disciplinary procedures.
- The following kinds of decisions can be discussed to make a plan of action:

An investigation may be actioned, in terms of the above policies and procedures.

- A decision can be made not to act if the complaint is seen to be made up or without foundation.
- A decision can be made to gather further information before making a final decision on how to act.

All complaints and reports must be kept on record, and all outcomes (results) must be recorded.

All reports or complaints shared with other authorities for solving must be followed up, and records must be kept of all communication in this regard.

Investigations and disciplinary proceedings that are actioned as a result of complaints or reports will be handled according to the centre manager/or governing body's discretion.

Acknowledged and signed on _____ (Date) at _____ (Place).

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Witness: _____



Psalm 127:3

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of
the womb a reward.



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